

Abstract:

Abstract: An automated payment system particularly suited for purchases over a distributed computer network such as the Internet. In such a distributed computer network, a merchant or vending computer contains certain promotional information which is communicated to a customer's computer. Based upon the promotional information, the operator of the customer's computer decides to purchase the services or goods described by the promotional information. The customer's computer is linked to a payment processing computer and the customer's credit card number and the amount of the goods or services is transmitted to the payment processing computer. The payment processing computer automatically contacts a bank for verification of the credit card and amount; the bank transmits an authorization to the payment processing computer. The payment processing computer communicates a self-generated transaction indicia, and in some embodiments a password, to the customer's computer. In the embodiment where a password is used, the customer's computer uses the password with the merchant's computer in obtaining access to protected information or to establish shipping instructions.